

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PRS-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 H-03 SS-20

NSC-07 SY-04 JUSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01

PA-04 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 /075 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:MHVAN ORDER

APPROVED BY NEA/P:MHVAN ORDER

S/PRS - MR. KING (INFO)

NEA/INS - MR. LORTON

SCA/SCS - MR. LIVORNESE (INFO)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE

REF: NEW DELHI 10421

1. IN ANTICIPATION QUERIES ON HARCOS-FLETCHER AT NOON
PRESS BRIEFING AUGUST 6 FOLLOWING GUIDANCE WAS PREPARED:

QUOTE: Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE
HEALTH OF THE TWO AMERICANS IN JAIL IN CALCUTTA?

A. MR. HARCOS AND MR. FLETCHER HAVE BEEN ON A HUNGER
STRIKE SINCE JUNE 17. OUR MOST RECENT REPORT SAID THAT
HARCOS HAD LOST 20 POUNDS AND FLETCHER 19 POUNDS SINCE THE
HUNGER STRIKE BEGAN. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN
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TAKING SOME NOURISHMENT.

Q. WHEN WERE HARCOS AND FLETCHER LAST SEEN BY A CONSULAR OFFICER?

A- HARCOS AND FLETCHER HAVE BEEN VISITED REGULARLY BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN CALCUTTA. THE LAST VISIT WAS AUGUST 5; ANOTHER IS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY. THEY LOOKED WELL, ALTHOUGH PALE AND THINNER THAN WHEN THEY BEGAN THE HUNGER STRIKE ON JUNE 17. BOTH PRISONERS ARE STILL ACCEPTING NASAL FORCED FEEDING.

Q. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THEIR CASES?

A. YOU KNOW THAT THEY WERE ARRESTED ON APRIL 26, 1973, AND HAVE RETAINED COUNSEL. PRE-TRIAL PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEGUN IN CALCUTTA AND A TRIAL JUDGE HAS BEEN NAMED. A TRIAL DATE HAS NOT YET BEEN SET ALTHOUGH WE HAVE REPEATEDLY URGED THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO SCHEDULE A PROMPT TRIAL FOR THE TWO MEN.

Q. ARE THE PAIR IN ANY WAY AFFILIATED WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT? THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE TWO WERE SPIES FOR THE U.S.

A. NEITHER HARCOS NOR FLETCHER HAS ANY CONNECTION OF ANY SORT WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

Q. WHAT COMMENT DO YOU HAVE ON THE REPORTED STATEMENT OF AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL THAT THEIR DETENTION WITHOUT THE FILING OF CHARGES IS AN "OUTRAGE."

A. I HAVE NO COMMENT ON THAT SPECIFIC PERSONAL JUDGMENT. BUT I WILL SAY THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT REMAINS CONCERNED ABOUT THIS CASE. AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN HAS TALKED TO THE INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY SINGH ON THE MATTER, AND DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE HE ALSO SPOKE TO INDIAN AMBASSADOR KAUL ABOUT THE CASE. BESIDES THAT THE OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH BOTH AMBASSADOR KAUL AND HIS SUBORDINATES ABOUT A PROMPT DISPOSITION OF THE CASE.

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Q. DO WE KNOW ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THE CHARGES UNDER WHICH THE MEN WILL BE TRIED?

A. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY SAID WE CANNOT COMMENT ON ANY CHARGES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC, BUT LAWYERS FOR THE TWO MEN HAVE SAID THEY WERE ENGAGED IN DRUG SMUGGLING. END QUOTE.

2. NO QUERIES ON HARCOS-FLETCHER WERE RAISED AT AUGUST 6 BRIEFING. LENGTHY AUGUST 6 NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON HARCOS FLETCHER BY WEINRAUB BEING CARRIED ON WIRELESS FILE.

3. DECLASSIFY DECEMBER 31, 1974, OR WHEN RELEASED. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE171305
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MHVAN ORDER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740214-1000
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740869/aaaachqu.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NEW DELHI 10421
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS GUIDANCE
TAGS: PFOR, IN, (HARCOS), (FLETCHER)
To: NEW DELHI CALCUTTA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005